

Loans Acts Amendments

secretary, to consider my criticisms, because it is not the first year that I have heard farmers complain: I am by profession a notary. I have to review and complete files for farmers concerning farm loans, and during my career as a notary, which extends over more than 20 years, I have seen that in the Gaspé Peninsula, at least at the time when I practised my profession actively, the farmers of my area received no more than five loans from the Farm Credit Corporation. Why? Because its rules are too strict, and no consideration is given to the region in evaluating the property and assets of the farmers. In my opinion, our farmers, whether they be from the Gaspé Peninsula, from the Montreal area, from the west or from the east, have as much right to live as those who are advantaged by market and climate conditions.

I therefore trust that those remarks will not fall on deaf ears and that, in the future, our farmers will get more attention on the part of the inspectors who, in their reports, decide whether or not they will be entitled to a farm loan.

Contrary to farm loans, loans to small businesses have been of immeasurable help and have enabled several businessmen in my area to survive and even expand their businesses. That increase from \$25,000 to \$50,000 will certainly help, in view of the considerable increase in construction and equipment, and to a greater extent, both businessmen and merchants. The same goes for fishermen who, for the second time in less than a week, are being helped by the government of Canada; last week, with regard to subsidies for their fishing boats, the government changed the act and increased its help.

I therefore want to thank the minister and the government for having introduced those measures, those amendments to the law which will, I trust, give the help their beneficiaries are entitled to expect.

● (1630)

[English]

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on this bill I commend the previous speaker for bringing forward some very good points. However, he did refer to the statement of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) that we could perhaps get on with the business of an election. I think the farmers of western Canada and Canada generally would forgive us if we were out of this House for a few months, then came back and proceeded in a new direction. All we have been hearing from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) is talk. It was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne that there would be a number of things done in respect of agriculture. We have not yet seen introduced any of the bills in this regard.

Mr. Whelan: There is one in the Senate.

Mr. Schellenberger: We have not seen the legislation which was promised for the benefit of Canada. It is time these bills were brought forward so that we could see if there really is something in store for western Canada.

Bill C-14 is not new legislation. It has to do with legislation that has been in place for some time. This legislation is very important to farmers, small businessmen and fish-

[Mr. Béchard.]

ermen of Canada. A number of the provisions of this legislation deal with housekeeping items such as increasing the period from 1974 until 1977. I am glad the government finally has come around to doing what the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) and the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) fought for the last time such a bill was before the House; that is, that the Treasury branches of Alberta be able to provide loans under the Farm Improvement Loans Act and the Small Businesses Loans Act.

This bank has been in place for a number of years and is in competition with the other banks and credit unions in Alberta. I think it is only fair that the farmers of Alberta should be able to go to the bank with which they deal in many cases in order to obtain a farm improvement loan. The main purposes originally for this legislation were the purchase of agricultural implements, new and used, the construction, repair or alteration of farm buildings, the purchase of livestock, the purchase of additional farmland, and general works for the improvement or development of a farm, including clearing and breaking of land, irrigation systems, farm electric systems, fencing and draining works.

When looking at these original purposes, I suggest the reason for the increase from \$25,000 to \$50,000 is abundantly clear. The price has not only doubled, but it has multiplied drastically in respect of most of these purposes. The price the farmers have to pay has in most cases increased several times. We might consider agricultural implements, for example. Most farmers have found that in the last five or ten years the price of tractors has doubled. In some cases the price has tripled. We find that the price many farmers in western Canada must pay for a tractor is \$12,000.

Because of the inability to obtain labour, most farmers must face increased capitalization costs in order to purchase machinery. They can no longer obtain the necessary labour to move the hay off the fields, and therefore must buy automatic bale-stackers, and so on, in order to remain in business. Professional agronomists have stated that one of the most serious problems facing agriculture today is the lack of labour. It seems to me that this situation forces farmers to become involved in increased capitalization in respect of machinery, and the result is that farm improvement loans in an amount of \$25,000 are inadequate today. Inflation plays a large part in this situation.

I am happy to see included in this bill a new provision that would allow farmers to use farm improvement loans to finance major repairs and overhaul of equipment. We have seen reported in the *Globe and Mail*—and many farmers have told me the same thing—that there are not—tractors and equipment available for purchase if the farmers wish to purchase them. In the past number of years many farmers were unable to afford the price of new equipment. This year, however, because of the higher prices for grain we find that some of them are now in a position to buy new equipment.

I have had reports from the west that equipment which had been ordered last fall still has not been delivered. What is the result? The old equipment used by the farmers will have to be repaired. I think it is time a provision was included in this legislation that would make it possible to